



**Summary:**

- Final HSR review backflips on own draft recommendations - 'Status quo' fails extra virgin olive oils on healthiness labelling.
- The HSR calculator is not fit-for-purpose to calculate healthiness rating for edible oils.
- AOA is calling for a regulated exemption of edible oils from the HSRS until the calculator is fixed.

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## HEALTH STAR RATING FIVE YEAR REVIEW BACKFLIPS ON EDIBLE OILS

The Australian Olive Association (AOA) is warning that final recommendations from the Health Star Rating System (HSRS) Five Year Review Report will mislead consumers on healthy oils.

The final recommendations go against findings from the Draft Report, which outlined the shortcomings of the HSR calculator's ability to assess the true healthiness of edible oils. Instead, the final report recommends 'status quo' for oils, meaning naturally produced extra virgin olive oil (EVOO) will be ranked with fewer stars than refined seed oils, such as canola and sunflower.

The AOA is calling for a regulated exemption of edible oils from category 3 products in the HSRS and is seeking Government support to work with industry to improve the HSR calculator so it delivers accurate information about the relative healthiness of edible oils to consumers.

Concerned consumer groups and public health experts have called the long-awaited review a missed opportunity to reform the HSRS, citing that it may be another five years before the system meets consumers' needs.

The government-supported HSRS allocates packaged foods in the same category a health score out of five to help guide consumers to make healthier choices. The Review was intended to assess the state of the HSRS against this ability. However, the final recommendations overlooked the fact that, for edible oils, the HSR algorithm fails to make an appropriate healthiness assessment because it rates healthiness on the single factor of saturated fat. The small difference in saturated fat levels between EVOO and canola or sunflower oils is far outweighed by the positive health benefits of EVOO.

*"Our position to exempt edible oils from the HSRS has remained the same throughout the entire review process - that edible oils be exempt from the HSRS until the calculator becomes fit-for-purpose",* says Greg Seymour, AOA CEO.

He added, *"Edible oils are a single ingredient food that were never designed to be ranked by the HSR. Giving a ranking based on saturated fat alone, while ignoring all the other positive nutrients, is going to mislead consumers about what is widely known to be healthier."*

EVOO is a naturally produced oil which has scientifically proven health-protective properties. There is no scientific evidence to suggest that highly refined oils, like canola oil or sunflower oil, should rank higher than EVOO.

As recently reported in the Sydney Morning Herald, Nutrition Scientists across Australia, including internationally respected Nutrition Scientist and Dietician Dr. Joanna McMillan and Deakin University's Institute for Health Transformation Director Professor Anna Peeters, have warned the impact of the Review recommendations for oils would mislead and confuse consumers.

*"Aussies generally know EVOO is the healthiest choice. It's relatively low in saturated fat and contains so many beneficial nutrients with a body of scientific research to prove it. So we [the industry] would welcome the*



*opportunity to work with Government on developing a more sophisticated HSRS calculator that accounts for these types of positive attributes, to ensure the HSRS does what it was intended. Until that happens, edible oils should be exempt from the HSRS so the Government-endorsed system isn't undermining consumer confidence",* says Mr. Seymour.

The Australia and New Zealand Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation (Food Forum), which consists of State and Territory Ministers from Australia and New Zealand, will consider the Final Report and recommendations at their upcoming meeting in November.

Given the final report has recommended no changes to the system for edible oils, the AOA believes it is critical that the Food Forum rejects the status quo recommendation for edible oils.

*"It's disappointing to see that, while a national review of a system designed to benefit consumers was conducted, and fundamental flaws of the system were identified, there were no solutions proposed to fix them. Australians deserve better than that",* says Mr. Seymour.

The HSRS is currently voluntary, meaning producers can choose to display their rating. However, if the status quo continues for edible oils, Australia and New Zealand will be the only countries in the world where regulators create an environment in which sunflower and canola oil are able to use an official system of endorsement to encourage the use of those oils in preference to EVOO. Despite the scientific evidence that EVOO is healthier, the HSRS would mislead consumers into thinking that refined oils are the healthier choice.

The AOA is calling on all industry partners, health groups and the Food Forum members to support a regulated exemption of edible oils from the HSR. Relevant government bodies should work with industry to invest in improving the calculator so it delivers accurate information about the relative healthiness of edible oils for the benefit of consumers.

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See more on the Sydney Morning Herald's coverage of the HSR's impact on EVOO [here](#).

See the Final Report of the Health Star Rating Five Year Review [here](#).

See the Australian Dietary Guidelines [here](#).